



PO Box 218, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
Phone: 650 726 4980 - Fax: 650 726 2991
Email: theheirloomseedstore@gmail.com

To Grow An Amazing Garden, Start With Great Seeds.....

What Is Agretti – Growing Salsola Soda In The Garden

Fans of Chef Jamie Oliver will be familiar with *Salsola soda*, also known as Agretti. The rest of us are asking “what is Agretti” and “what are Agretti uses.” The following article contains *Salsola soda* information and how to grow agretti in your garden.

What is Agretti?

Popular in Italy and hot in high-end Italian restaurants in the United States, Agretti is an 18-inch wide by 25-inch tall (46 x 64 cm.) herb plant. This annual has long, chive-like foliage and when mature, in about 50 days or so, looks like a large [chive plant](#) ^[1].

Salsola Soda Information

The flavor of Agretti has been described variously as a bit bitter, almost sour, to a more pleasant description of a plant with a pleasant crunch, hint of bitterness and the tang of salt. Also known as Roscano, friar’s beard, saltwort, Barill or Russian Thistlewort, it grows naturally throughout the Mediterranean. This succulent is closely related to [samphire, or sea fennel](#) ^[2].

The name ‘Salsola’ means salt, and rather apropos as Agretti has been used to desalinate soil. This succulent was once also reduced to soda ash (hence its name), an integral ingredient in famous Venetian glassmaking until a synthetic process replaced its use in the 19th century.

Agretti Uses

Today, Agretti’s uses are strictly culinary. It can be eaten fresh, but more commonly it is sautéed with garlic and olive oil and served as a side dish. When Agretti is young and tender, it can be used in salads, but another more common use is lightly steamed and dressed with lemon juice, olive oil, sea salt and fresh cracked black pepper. It is also popular for use as a serving bed, classically with fish.

Agretti may also replace its cousin Okahijiki (*Salsola komarovi*) in sushi where its tartness, brininess and texture balance the delicate fish flavor. Agretti is a good source of vitamin A, iron and calcium.

How to Grow Agretti Plants

Agretti has become all the rage in part due to celebrity chefs, but also because it is hard to come by. Anything rare is often sought after. Why is it so difficult to come by? Well, if you were thinking of growing *Salsola soda* a year or so ago and you began searching for seeds, you may have found them difficult to procure. Any purveyor that stocked the seed couldn’t meet the demand for them. Also, floods in central Italy that year reduced the stocks of seed.

Another reason that Agretti seed is hard to come by is that it has a very short viability period, only about 3 months. It is also notoriously hard to germinate; the germination rate is around 30%.

That said, if you can obtain seeds and procure them, plant them immediately in the spring when soil temperatures are around 65 F. (18 C.). Sow the seeds and cover them with about ½ inch (1 cm.) of soil.

Seeds should be spaced 4-6 inches (10-15 cm.) apart. Thin the plants to 8-12 inches (20-30 cm.) apart in a row. Seeds should germinate some time within 7-10 days.

You can start harvesting the plant when it is around 7 inches (17 cm.) tall. Harvest by cutting the tops or sections of the plant and it will then regrow, much the same as chive plants.

Agretti Sautéed With Pancetta



Just Picked Agretti With Roots Intact

Agretti Sautéed With Pancetta

Yield: Serves 4 **Prep Time:** 10 mins **Cook Time:** 12 mins

Agretti is an unusual spring green, or swamp grass that grows near the water.

Ingredients:

1 Bunch of Agretti
1/2 Cup Diced Pancetta
2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper

Directions:

Wash the Agretti well and cut off the roots and any thick stem pieces, then dry on paper towels.

In a large wide bottom saucepan or frying pan, fry the diced pancetta until it's crispy in the olive oil, about 5 minutes.

Add the cleaned and dried Agretti to the saucepan and sauté the Agretti until it softens but still retains a little crunch to the bite, about 6 to 8 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper and serve warm.

Note: If you find the Agretti, try soaking it in cool water for a few minutes after you cut off the roots and before you cook it